

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) on Friday voted with colleagues to pass the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill, which will fund programs for the Defense Department and Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2010. The bill passed by a vote of 415-3.

"Supporting our veterans has been a priority of mine for as long as I've been in public service, and I'm proud of the bill we passed today," Rep. Farr said on Friday. "This bill continues the historic increases for vet programs that we've seen since Democrats took over Congress two years ago."

The legislation includes two programs important to the Central Coast:

- Marine Meteorology Center: \$10.24 million. The current building provides world-class scientists at the Naval Research Laboratory in Monterey with cramped workspace in leased trailers. The new two-story building will provide an appropriate environment for the use of high performance computer resources and secure spaces for classified processing.
- Base Realignment and Closure Legacy Account: \$537 million. These funds will be used to address the large unfunded backlog of environmental cleanup for bases that were closed during previous BRAC rounds, including unexploded ordnance cleanup on Fort Ord. This level is \$79 million above the president's budget request, an increase that Rep. actively promoted.

Including today's House bill, Congress has provided a 58 percent increase in funding for veterans health care and benefits since January 2007. These funds have resulted in a total increase of 8,300 claims processors, 145 community-based outpatient clinics, 70 Vet Centers and more than 47,000 Veterans Health Administration employees.

Other national programs included in the bill:

- Department of Veterans Affairs: \$108.9 billion. These funds will be used for for veterans medical care, claims processors and facility improvements.
- Veterans Health Administration: \$45.1 billion including \$34.7 billion for medical services, \$4.6 billion for mental health services and \$3.2 billion for homeless vet programs.
- Military Construction: \$23.2 billion.

The bill awaits Senate consideration. Once the Senate acts, the two versions will be reconciled, then sent to the president for signature.

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